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**UNVEILING OF THE WILLIAM H. HERNDON
MONUMENT AT OAK RIDGE CEMETERY,
SPRINGFIELD, ILL., THURSDAY,
MAY 30, 1918.**

By HARRY E. BARKER.

On the wooded hill, just above the chapel in Oak Ridge Cemetery, a little to the west of north, lie the remains of Abraham Lincoln's last law partner, William H. Herndon. On his right and left are buried his first and second wives. No stone had ever marked his grave, though a marble slab, placed in memory of his first wife, indicated the Herndon burying place.

In a pamphlet written by Henry B. Rankin of Springfield, Ill., and published in 1912, attention was called to the absence of suitable markers at places of public interest in connection with the life of Lincoln, and among those noted was that of the grave of his last law partner.

This forceful plea of Mr. Rankin caught the attention of Jesse W. Weik of Greencastle, Ind., a long time friend and admirer of Herndon, and collaborator with him in the publication of his "Life of Lincoln." Early in 1917 Mr. Weik undertook to secure funds from interested friends in various states for the purpose of erecting a suitable memorial stone at Herndon's grave. So successful was he in his endeavor that by July 1st, subscriptions had been secured from forty-four persons, living in nineteen different cities, covering the cost of the enterprise. Of the forty-four subscribers, sixteen are residents of Springfield, Ill.

On July 18, 1917, a contract was signed with a local company for the erection of a monument in simple tablet form, to be made of dark Quincy granite from the quarries in Massachusetts. This contract was fulfilled to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, the work being completed and the stone in position about December 1st.

The total height of the monument is five feet, six inches, the polished slab measuring fifty inches high, thirty-six inches wide, fourteen inches thick and set in a massive base of rough-hewn stone. In plain Roman lettering in the face of the polished granite is chiseled this simple inscription and notable quotation:

William H. Herndon

Abraham Lincoln's Law Partner Seventeen years

"The struggles of this age and succeeding ages for God and Man, Religion, Humanity and Liberty, with all their complex and grand relations, may they triumph and conquer forever, is my ardent wish and most fervent soul-prayer.—Wm. H. Herndon, Feb. 23, 1858."

On either side of the stone is carved the inscriptions:

Mary J. Herndon

July 27, 1822—Aug. 18, 1861

Anna M. Herndon

Mar. 1, 1836—Jan. 8, 1893

The beautiful sentiment expressed by Herndon in 1858 and now cut in enduring stone that all may read and meditate, reveals an interesting story. Young Rankin, then a law student with the firm of Lincoln and Herndon, purchased an autograph album and fortuitously offered it first to Lincoln who lightly wrote: "Today, Feb. 23, 1858, the owner honored me with the privilege of writing the first name in this book.—A. Lincoln."

Handing the open book to Herndon with the request that he write on the same page, Mr. Rankin obtained and still has in his possession a sentiment which might well serve for a text of discourse from press, platform and pulpit, and which was thought worthy of a chief place on its author's monument.

When the question arose of selecting a date for dedicating or unveiling the monument, consideration was given the date of birth, December 25th, the date of death, March 14th, and Memorial Day, May 30th, a day peculiarly appropriate for paying tribute to the honored dead. The latter date was

chosen and on the afternoon of Thursday, May 30, 1918, at 3 o'clock, a large number of relatives, members of the Sangamon County bar, and interested friends assembled about the grave.

Mr. Adolph Bernard, president of the Sangamon County Bar Association, acted as master of ceremonies and in well chosen remarks introduced Mr. Vachel Lindsay, a Springfield poet of national reputation, who recited in most effective manner his well-known poem, "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight in Springfield." Mr. Lindsay preceded the recitation of his poem with a few well-chosen remarks. He said, among other things: "My friends, before I recite the poem I have been asked to give you today, I would like to say that Herndon's life of Lincoln cut the deepest into my memory. If you will look over the lives of Lincoln, you will find Herndon's more often spoken of than the rest. Herndon gives more of Lincoln's personal characteristics, habits and more of his life before he became president."

The poem follows:

It is portentous and a thing of state
That here at midnight, in our little town,
A mourning figure walks, and will not rest,
Near the old courthouse pacing up and down.

Or by his homestead, or in shadowed yards,
He lingers where his children used to play,
Or through the market, on the well-worn stones,
He stalks until the dawn-stars burn away.

A bronzed, lank man! His suit of ancient black,
A famous high-top hat and plain worn shawl,
Make him the quaint great figure that men love—
The prairie lawyer, master of us all.

He cannot sleep upon his hillside now;
He is among us:—as in times before;
And we who toss and lie awake for long,
Breathe deep, and start, to see him pass the door.

His head is bowed. He thinks on men and kings;
 Yea, when the sick world cries, how can he sleep?
 Too many peasants fight, they know not why;
 Too many homesteads in black terror weep.

The sins of all the war-lords burn his heart;
 He sees the dreadnaughts scouring every main;
 He carries on his shawl-wrapped shoulders now,
 The bitterness, the folly and the pain.

He cannot rest until a spirit-dawn
 Shall come—the shining hope of Europe free;
 The league of sober folk, the workers' earth,
 Bringing long peace to cornland, alp and sea.

It breaks his heart that kings must murder still,
 That all his hours of travail here for men
 Seem yet in vain. And who will bring white peace
 That he may sleep upon his hill again?

Mr. Hardin W. Masters, Esq., a leading attorney of Springfield, Ill., who had been selected as the speaker of the day, was then introduced by Mr. Bernard as one eminently qualified through long years of acquaintance with Herndon, to give the address.

Attorney Masters spoke as follows:

“It is fitting that upon the occasion of the decoration of the graves of our fallen heroes and friends, which has become a sacred custom throughout the land, that we should also decorate the graves of the civilian heroes as well as those who may have fallen in battle, for ‘Peace hath its victory no less renowned than those in war.’

“We come to dedicate the marker placed at the grave of our friend in life, William H. Herndon. It may be thought a tardy recognition of the merits of the dead, but it is none the less sincere. The memory of the active, impulsive, energetic man in life, who now sleeps beneath this stone is more bright and his character as a man better understood than at the time of his death. A bright intellect and a worthy citizen passes away. In the mad rush of life we pause, look into the open

grave, perhaps shed the sympathetic tear, and immediately join in life's battle, and except for recollections which may be momentary, his life and character and the memory thereof gradually fades away. Men die but principles forever survive. Those whose memories live throughout the ages and withstand the ravages of time are those who have accomplished something in this life. Men whose memories expand and grow brighter as the years pass are those regarded as having been given to the world to act a part, perform a service for humanity, govern a nation, command an army or deliver a message. In a sense this is true. But even so, when the individual life is analyzed it will be found that a Napoleon, Washington, a Shakespeare, Grant or Lincoln, through his ability, energy and labor worked out his own destiny.

WAS FOE TO SLAVERY.

"William H. Herndon in his brief day accomplished much. When he wrote the sentiment carved on this marker, in the album of Henry B. Rankin, his law student, he was weighted down mentally with the struggles that were on in this Nation. It was a struggle for humanity, liberty, democracy and for God. The tragedy in which Lovejoy lost his life wrought a change in the mental attitude of Mr. Herndon and his soul was inspired with the thought to banish forever the evil which had fastened itself upon this Nation. His impetuous, zealous and impulsive nature was aroused to right the wrongs and evil of slavery. From the day when, as a student of Illinois college, with forceful and eloquent denunciation of Lovejoy's murder, until the day of the end of slavery, he never ceased his assaults against any and all who sought to obstruct the way that led to ultimate success. The great service rendered by him in the struggles of that day, interwoven as they were with the immortal Lincoln, places his memory upon an historic plain and it will grow brighter through all the ages to come.

"He was the intimate friend and adviser of the martyred president for more than a score of years. In a professional, social and political way, they were in full sympathy and accord. Mr. Herndon loved Lincoln and rejoiced in his every success, politically and otherwise, and he lived to place upon the memory of Lincoln a literary wreath that will never be

excelled. It was his tribute of devotion to Lincoln as a man and as president, and as he doubtless thought was a faithful biography of the life of Mr. Lincoln.

"Herndon had in the fullest measure the courage of his convictions and he paved the way to Lincoln's success with fearless voice and pen, and materially assisted in the accomplishment of the desired result. Great men in those days, unable to break away from established policies and a legalized wrong, sought to belittle Lincoln's terse statement that 'this nation could not endure half slave and half free,' but that ultimately it would become all one thing or all the other.

"This statement was justified by subsequent history, and his name stands forth in freedom's beautiful robes and form and today blesses the people of all these United States.

"Today the world is engaged in a titanic struggle to determine the question whether this world can endure part autocracy and part democracy. It is the last, as we fervently hope, of the struggles of humanity for freedom and liberty, and may we not conclude that with prophetic vision when these words, inscribed upon this tomb, were written by Mr. Herndon that he foresaw the struggle which was ultimately to come and which is now upon us. The struggle of the day of which he wrote was not the first, but up to that time was one of the most important struggles for liberty.

SAW PROPHETIC VISION.

"Did he see in prophetic vision, the millions of men arrayed against each other upon the field of battle, the one side seeking to perpetuate autocracy and the propaganda that might makes right, and on the other that all men are created free and that the divine right of kings to rule must and shall be wiped from the face of the earth? The sentiment in the inscription on this tablet as the soulful prayer of Wm. H. Herndon, was answered in 1865, and the prayer therein expressed and by him extended to us of this day will be answered in this bloody conflict as it was then. This struggle will continue until the world becomes a democracy and the common people will be kings with the right of freedom and self-government.

"A lawyer of ability, Wm. H. Herndon gave his life and best energy to the cause of humanity. He was equipped by

nature with a splendid intellect and a zealous, honest and soulful nature, and he threw his life and force with voice and pen into the cause he espoused.

“Wrongfully he has been accused with being an office seeker and that his life was embittered. Nothing could be further from the real truth. He was not an office seeker, nor was he an office holder, and beyond some local office he never held or sought for position or public offices. He was appointed bank examiner by the war governor, Richard Yates, and when Lincoln after his election to the presidency asked him if he wished for any position, he replied: ‘No; you may speak to Governor Yates; I would like to be re-appointed bank examiner.’

HERNDON WAS RADICAL.

“Lincoln was a conservative, Herndon was a radical. They were agreed as to the ultimate purpose, but differed as to the methods to attain that purpose. Mr. Herndon was some years the junior of Mr. Lincoln. He was a great student and omniverous reader, and was a great aid to Mr. Lincoln, being possessed of extensive book knowledge. From the day he entered into partnership with Lincoln in the practice of law, until such partnership was dissolved by death, he was his faithful friend. He was one of the earliest and perhaps the foremost who urged Lincoln to become a candidate for the presidency. He had carefully canvassed the ground in the State of Illinois with Mr. Lincoln’s friends on that subject. He was chosen and commissioned to canvass the situation throughout the eastern states and well, as history informs us, did he perform this service. His commission was to create a sentiment for Lincoln.

“During the debates held between Lincoln and Douglas in the year 1858, to a degree Lincoln depended upon his partner, Mr. Herndon, to furnish him with data and facts and often during this memorable campaign he telegraphed or wrote Herndon for such information. As it appears to us now, he was the forerunner for Abraham Lincoln and his mission was to pave the way to his election—not only of his election to the presidency, but for the ultimate success of his theory and belief, in freedom for all the people of these United States.

“Wm. H. Herndon had few equals as a public speaker, and if not the first he was among the first in this State to speak in favor of the abolition of slavery. He took a bold stand against slavery and the first address was delivered by him at Petersburg, Ill.—yet remembered by some of the older citizens. This was a classic and one of the greatest orations Herndon ever made from the stump. It was an historic oration and in his peroration he appealed to Donati’s comet, asking it to inform its heavenly sisters of what was about to take place in the United States for God and human liberty.

NOT AN OFFICE-SEEKER.

“Mr. Herndon was not only not an office-seeker, but he cared but little for the goods of this world, and true to the old saying as a lawyer, he ‘worked hard, lived well and died poor.’ Of his time and labor he gave without stint to the great cause he had espoused. No man who ever lived or died had greater love or admiration for Lincoln than did Wm. H. Herndon, and when the news flashed over the wire in this country in 1860, announcing Lincoln’s election, his was a boyish joy. In the daily intercourse in the dingy law office between these two great men a friendship and admiration for each other had been established that time could not change or modify.

Temperamentally and in almost all other respects, they were as unlike as two men might be. Lincoln in a sense was an uneducated man, while Herndon had a liberal education. Historical facts were at his command and philosophy and literature were not unknown to him, and in the fullness of his mental storehouse he was able to and did render valuable service, as it was his pleasure to do, to his partner, his friend and afterward the martyred president.

“In the decline of his life it was my good fortune and honor to have intimately known Mr. Herndon. As I entered upon the way and the struggles that were before me, I frequently and freely met and talked with him. It was with profound interest I heard from his lips of the past, the road over which he had then traveled and the struggles he had had to contend with. His life as I knew it was an honest, earnest struggle for the right as he saw it. He had no ambition to acquire riches or fame. His life was devoted to the

succor of the oppressed and to eradicate and blot out the stain of slavery in this Nation. It was his ambition to make the Declaration of Independence everywhere a living truth. While he was a lawyer, he disliked the technicalities of practice and frequently made jocular remarks about the difference between "tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum."

"Knowing him as I did, if he could be heard from the spirit world to speak and express his wish here today beyond that expressed on his tomb, it would be his wish that no unjust claims should be made for him, and that no eulogy be pronounced upon his life which was not supported by the record and sustained by the proofs. He would also in his honest, blunt way, command that no excuse be offered for his faults nor that his failings be exaggerated.

WAS LOVER OF TRUTH.

"Such was the character of Wm. H. Herndon. He loved the truth. His early life, so far as I know, was much the same as that of other young men similarly situated.

"He came from splendid ancestry, who were from the South, and in their sentiments were pro-slavery, but when the Whig party was dissolved in 1854 he allied himself with the Whigs and Democrats, who took the view of slavery that it was a moral wrong and ought to be done away with. It may be true that in his youthful zeal the murder of Lovejoy, heretofore referred to, changed the whole course of his life, because from that day he espoused the cause for which Lovejoy died, and the force of his logic and versatility of his pen were used to light the fires of liberty throughout the land, and he was fortunate to know that what he had labored for had been accomplished.

"He did his work with which the world may be concerned within comparatively a few years—from 1854 to 1870 embraces the time in which he wrought. During that period and until the period of 1861, he was the active business partner of Lincoln.

"As I said awhile ago, Lincoln was a conservative. Having his origin in the South, he hated slavery, but recognized that under the organic laws of the land the slave was the property of the southern people and if it were necessary to prove that Lincoln was a conservative, in the emancipation

proclamation which was issued by him, the abolishment of slavery was contingent upon the states then in rebellion returning to the Union, and that they would lay down their arms, otherwise the emancipation proclamation at a certain time would take effect. The states in rebellion refused to accept this condition and slavery was therefore abolished. This result was hailed by Herndon as an epoch in history and an answer to his soulful prayer for liberty, and so it is that his life is connected with that of Lincoln.

"Being, as he was, a firm friend and admirer of Lincoln, and long before he was nationally known, he from the mountain tops and the sublime points of vantage, looked down upon the plain where the sentiment was created which was to materialize and bear the fruit which in God's good time would weld together the nations of the world and all mankind in one common brotherhood.

"Those who scoffed at Lincoln and caricatured him and ridiculed him as an incompetent did not know or understand him. Herndon knew Lincoln better than Seward, Greeley or Chase, or any other of the legal advisers in or out of his cabinet. He was confident and so expressed himself in his correspondence with Theodore Parker and others when he said, 'Wait and see,' and in waiting he was justified when the world became aware of the fact that Lincoln was greater than the whole of those who traduced him and sought to be his advisors or to belittle him.

ABLY SUPPORTED LINCOLN.

"Herndon therefore not only supported and aided Lincoln in his proper ambition before, but after he became the head of the nation and commander of the greatest army of the world up to that time.

"My friends, Herndon's love for Lincoln did not cease upon his death, but he was his champion afterward.

"Herndon may have made mistakes in some of his writings, He was human and made mistakes in other matters. If I should say he did not, I would offend against the truth and place him in character above the human and above the man for whom he did so much. The history of each of these men is written. It may be that it is not as well understood now as it

will be a hundred years from now. The relation between Herndon and Lincoln will become better understood as time goes on. If it be granted that Mr. Herndon made a mistake in his biography of Mr. Lincoln, it was a mistake of the head and not of the heart, and in no sense does it detract from the glory or grandeur of Mr. Lincoln's character, and if there is a word or statement that can be found in any of William H. Herndon's writings with reference to Lincoln which is not strictly in accordance with the truth, knowing Herndon as I did, I with confidence assert that when he wrote the same he believed it to be true.

"Yes, Mr. Herndon had his faults as all men have, but a multitude of faults in his case could be overlooked when we say and challenge the world to dispute it, that he was scrupulously honest and a man of truth and integrity. It is no great deed or act to revile the living, at least in their absence; it is easy and requires little courage to make charges against the dead, as no word comes back from the grave in reply, and as the memory of the martyred Lincoln shall grow brighter and his colossal figure stand forth adorning the pages of history for all time to come, so shall be known the virtues of his coadjutor and friend who sleeps beneath this stone.

" 'In the struggles of this age and the age to come for God, humanity and liberty, may they conquer forever is my soulful prayer.' Who but a soul and mind devoted and dedicated to the cause of humanity and to God and to the principles of liberty and the cause of righteousness, on the moment, could have penned these words, so pregnant with patriotic sentiment, so earnest and impressive? No friend nor adversary ever could or did charge William H. Herndon with duplicity or insincerity. He was loyal to his friends and an open, courageous adversary. He was zealous, but abounded in charity. In the epoch and history making period in which he lived, he stood forth as the champion and advocated the principles announced by the sentiment on this stone.

ADVOCATE OF LIBERTY.

"In the re-birth of civilization now taking place, in which the world is being drenched with human blood and the issues of force and might are arrayed against right and democracy,

in this struggle may we not know had William H. Herndon lived today, where he would have stood. Yes, with incisive, terse language, with keen logic, by voice and pen, he would be heard in the cause of liberty for the cause of democracy, for the people and for God, in this great struggle which he seems to have foreshadowed when he wrote those words, would some day arise.

“Dead. His wish, his recorded soulful prayer is with us today,—the wish and soulful prayer of the American nation and the civilized world that autocracy and might shall be crushed by democracy and right; and this soulful prayer of Herndon’s is also that America and her heroic allies, whose blood and treasures are being poured out in the cause of humanity shall not have been in vain.

“Thus, in life, Lincoln and Herndon, allies and friends partners in the practice of law, differing radically, yet firmly held together and in accord as to ultimate truth and facts, in death their memory so blended as to be inseparable.

“Live on, O Lincoln! Live on, O Herndon! and ages to come may your lights be reflected and your labors for humanity be the more prized and appreciated. And may your example be forever the inspiration of the youth of the land and the star of their hope and as time goes on be better understood.

“So today with feeble words and simple ceremonies, but with loyal hearts and loving hands we decorate with flowers the grave of our friend, a civilian hero, and dedicate this stone as pointing the spot where forever will repose the ashes of Illinois’ illustrious son whose prayer, a continuing wish for liberty, God and humanity, is with us, and an inspiration to all those who this day on the blood-drenched fields of Europe are challenging the advancing hosts of autocracy and might.

“‘The struggles of this age and succeeding ages for God and man—religion, humanity and liberty, with their complex and grand relations—may they triumph and conquer forever is my ardent wish and most fervent soul-prayer.’

“In the ages to come, when this stone, through the ravages of time shall have crumbled to dust and decay, may this

sentiment now chiseled thereon be the creed and the realized hope of all the world, and the memory of its author, Wm. H. Herndon, live on to bless and cheer mankind until struggles shall be no more."

Placed at the head of the grave was a handsome wreath of magnolia leaves bound with a satin streamer, on which was lettered the old firm name of "Lincoln and Herndon."

A large American flag had been draped over the monument, and at an appropriate moment during the address, was drawn aside by the speaker.

The weather was fair and warm. Nature's new garments of green were never more beautiful. Thus, under surroundings and circumstances most favorable was consummated a long-cherished plan to mark the final resting place of William H. Herndon, friend, partner and biographer of Abraham Lincoln.